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Shoreline

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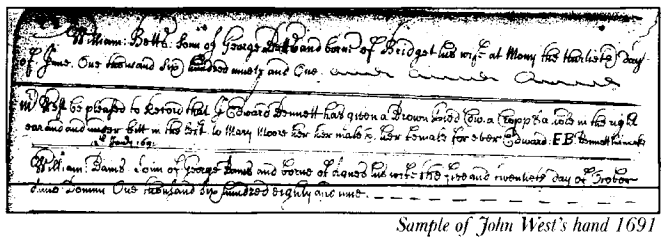
Somerset County, Maryland, Liber IKL: Not a Random Book of Vital Statistics by any Means

By T. Aaron Horner & James Edward Jensen

Liber IKL's birth, baptism, marriage, death, burial and court-proven age records make this book curiously interesting. The focus of this study rests with the origin of IKL's vital statistics through a comparative analysis of the different hand writings found throughout the book's pages. It was discovered, through our initial analysis, that Liber IKL was a vital statistics book from the beginning, where pages were set aside for each letter of the alphabet. The last 60 pages of the book are used for 17th century cattle marks. With this format the clerks were left with several blank spaces following the unused pages reserved for the different letters of the alphabet and thus chose to fill these blank folios with selected deeds covering the years 1711-1715 and 1722 along with 18th century cattle marks. The oldest dates in IKL are in the 1650s and the records go through to the 1690s—only a handful of entries in IKL date to the 18th century, which appear to have been entered by Peter Dent (1697-1705) and his successor Alexander Hall (1705>). On the June 12, 1694, during a Somerset County Court session, was read the Act of Assembly originally passed years before that required the recording of births, marriages and burials, within which the local county courts of Maryland were accused of being slack and negligent in their duties. The threat of fines was issued in order to insure that the county clerks would fulfill the requirements of the Act and thus liber IKL endured.



Sample of John West's hand 1691

All records prior to 1663 date to the 1650s and contain the birth records of the Bozman family, Elizabeth Berre and Jane Delamas, all of which are births occurring in Accomack, VA—this suggests that their arrival in Maryland prompted them to record the legitimacy and ages for their respective children as they moved north to Maryland from Virginia. There are also entries for the Rhodes family which date births to the 1650s, but these reference births overseas in England.

An examination of the surnames beginning with the letter "B" revealed several factors. There seems to be three different handwriting styles prior to 1697; however, there were only two clerks of court for Somerset County during that period, Edmund Beauchamp (to 1691) and John West (1691-1697). In November 1692, West began to enter the date upon which the actual vital statistics were entered.

The chronology of the records seems to be consistent, though there are entries that tend to back-track. This is where the idea of church books enters into the picture—where IKL represents a direct transcription of specific church records (the word church referring to "the people" and not a physical building, as the church parishes were not erected until 1692). When a date jumps back, usually the clerk is transcribing from a different church book. In certain situations, parents waited to baptize several children all at one time. Whether an individual was Anglican, Presbyterian or Quaker, one common factor in breaking down IKL focuses on geography. With the exception of a few entries for the seaboard side—such as a birth record for William Reed and a death record for Robert Richardson, both of Bogerternorton Hundred, and a reference to Daniel Selby of Mattapony—all records pertain to those inhabitants who lived on the bayside of old Somerset County. One reason those on the seaboard side were not recorded may be due to distance, since court in Somerset County, in the 17th century, was held at Manokin. Each hundred in the county had at least one of the three religious denominations setting up a place of worship. Certainly there were meeting places at Bogerternorton; however, those records have not survived. Anglicans do make up the majority of the records. Presbyterians are limited to those families living in Manokin, such as Ballard and King, or in Annemessex, such as Handy and Martin. Quakers found within the records are from the Annemessex, Monie or Wicomico meeting places; the Quaker meeting place at Bogerternorton (a.k.a. Mulberry Grove) is not registered in IKL. A brief overlap between Liber IKL and church books exists; however, no records in IKL repeat the information recorded in those books because there were no established churches prior to 1692. Throughout IKL there are no complete families within the record, meaning that only some of the children belonging to respective households were listed.

A closer look at IKL also revealed that the first entries placed into IKL primarily began with at least one family from the Manokin area followed by families from the Annemessex area, which reinforces our beliefs that the original entries in IKL were directly transcribed from church books. The church book used to start IKL was likely from the area of the Manokin River where the earliest court books were housed – thus the clerk would then have moved on to transcribe the entries from the

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Annemessex church books and so on.

The most strikingly important find from this analysis was the discovery of the "lost Quaker Records" dating from before 1695. It has been recorded that William Waters, who died in 1733, had been entrusted with the Lower Eastern Shore Quaker Records and that these records were to be delivered to the Third Haven Monthly Meeting in Maryland—although the records never arrived. Therefore, with IKL entries such as, "Ambrose Dixon Sen. died and was buried at the meeting house in Annemessex the 12th day of April Annoq Do One Thousand Six Hundred Eighty Seven" and "Elizabeth Dukes the wife of Robert Dukes died and was buried at the meeting house in Annemessex the last day of February One Thousand Six Hundred Eighty Seven" it is likely that such records came directly from the ever-elusive, early Quaker Records. This would make Liber IKL largely a second-generation abstract of early Anglican and Presbyterian church books, as well as Quaker meeting house records.

There are a few entries in IKL which would suggest that some judicial records were abstracted as well, to further bolster IKL's demographics, such as ages proven in court. One IKL entry, "Charles Ballard Negro woman called Rebecca was adjudged by the Justices at a Court held the 14th day of August Annoq Dom One Thousand Six Hundred Seventy Seven to be Fourteen years of age," is also found in Somerset County Judicial Records, 1675-1677, page 119, therefore proving that judicial records were directly transcribed into liber IKL. There are a few entries in IKL for the deaths of servants, such as Thomas Flood, servant to Charles Ballard, in 1666, which tells the reader that Liber IKL is neither mono-ethnic nor mono-class; but rather, that IKL represents a sufficient cross-section of the early settlers of Old Somerset County—including an entry for "John Puckham an Indian," representative of the Native American population.

Book Sale!

The Littleton Heritage, by Matthew Wise, is an extremely well-documented book that would be of interest to many members of historically Eastern Shore families. All of the families documented within the book are traced back to royal lines, both in England and in Ireland. Also included is a comprehensive 20-page index. Originally listed at $35.99, we are now offering this unique volume for only $19.99 (plus $3 shipping and handling and 5 percent sales tax if mailed within the state of Maryland). Don't miss this chance to possess a great resource at a great price. It's a "Wise" investment!

"Rogue & Dogg & Scotch Irish Men's God: A "scotch peddler" in the 17th-century Chesapeake"

The April 22, lecture by Dr. Elizabeth Ragan, Salisbury University, was an eye opening talk. Ragan began the day stating that it was "very Scottish weather out there..." referring to Delmarva's April showers. She provided a brief history of Somerset County, MD, and linked select Somerset settlers to Glasgow, Scotland – demonstrating how goods were apparently being traded back and forth between Maryland and Scotland. The main focus of her lecture was the Scotsman David Browne who arrived in Somerset County by April 1670 and within a short time rose in status to take on the title: the Honorable Colonel David Browne.